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State Army Summary
 BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH - ANALYSIS: SEPTEMBER 4, 1980

I. IRAN: MAJLIS TURNING TO CONSIDERATION OF HOSTAGE ISSUE -- WITH AGONIZING SLOWNESS

Millimeter by millimeter, the Majlis is moving toward a review of the hostage issue, although we doubt that there is any genuine consensus about how to handle it. The Majlis decision to reply to the letter from US Congressmen is significant because it is the first time that the parliament has formally turned its attention to the issue. In that sense, the decision is a victory for those who want to terminate the crisis. A reply to Congress will also make clearer the range of possible requirements for the hostages' release.

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Over the objection of a group of unidentified hardliners, former Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi was able to persuade a majority of the Majlis that a response to the Congressional letter was warranted [redacted]

[redacted] A primary reason for opposing the preparation of a reply was that it would commit the Majlis to "officially" putting its demands on paper. In the past, the radicals have deliberately kept their demands vague in order to perpetuate the crisis indefinitely.

Rafsanjani's decision to send the letter back to the foreign affairs committee of the Majlis rather than hold a full Majlis debate (following a public reading of the first draft) may be designed to delay the drafting process. In order to "hold the line" in the committee, the radicals could adopt one of two strategies:

- insist on a vague, general document which castigates the US but does not contain specific demands for ending the crisis; or
- present a list of tough demands which are pre-conditions to any hostage negotiations.

Since Ayatollahs Khameneie (leader of the Tehran Friday mosque) and Khoini (the Embassy occupiers' spiritual guru) are members of the committee, the hardliners will probably be able to assure that a document acceptable to them is drafted.

There are no solid indications that the Majlis knows what to do with the hostages. Moderates continue to warn about the dangers of a trial. Key fundamentalists, such as Beheshti and Rafsanjani, have still not taken any definitive stand on the issue, in large part because Khomeini still seems to be on the fence. [redacted] indicates that several hostage files have been sent to the Majlis for its eventual consideration, and that may be an indication of contingency planning for trials.